

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 13199 01 OF 02 091700Z

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ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-10 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-14

USIA-04 SAJ-01 OMB-01 EB-03 SIL-01 LAB-01 DRC-01

( ISO ) W

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R 091622Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4646

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT ELECTION EVE: CAMPAIGN RETROSPECT

SUMMARY - UNLESS THE OPINION POLLS ARE BADLY OUT OF LINE, LABOR SEEMS SET TO RETURN TO POWER WITH A COMFORTABLE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. IN A CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED CAMPAIGN IT HAS PROJECTED AN IMAGE OF MODERATION, COMPETENCE, AND SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND KEPT ITS LEFT-WING FIGURES AND RADICAL POLICIES WELL UNDER WRAPS. THE CONSERVATIVES HAVE BEEN HANDICAPPED BY THEIR FAILURE TO COME UP WITH NEW POLICIES AND NEW LEADERSHIP, AND BY THE THINNESS OF THEIR APPEAL FOR NATIONAL UNITY. LIBERALS HAVE HELD STEADY BUT NOT MADE THE HOPED FOR BREAK-

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PAGE 02 LONDON 13199 01 OF 02 091700Z

THROUGH. END SUMMARY

1) THE BRITISH VOTERS WILL TROOP TO THE POLLS TOMORROW IN A GENERAL MOOD OF PESSIMISM AND RESIGNATION. LIKE VOTERS IN ANY FREE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, THEY WILL CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR A COMPLEX VARIETY OF REASONS, INFLUENCED BY FEARS, FACTS, PREJUDICES, HABITS, AND SHEER PERVERSITY. YET FROM OUT OF THEIR COLLECTIVE CHOICES WILL EMERGE A GOVERNMENT CHARGED WITH GUIDING THE COUNTRY THROUGH ITS WORST ECONOMIC CRISIS IN FORTY YEARS, DECIDING ONCE AND FOR ALL WHETHER OR NOT BRITAIN IS TO REMAIN IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, AND COPING WITH THE CENTRIFUGAL FORCES OF CELTIC NATIONALISM. IT'S ALL RATHER SOBERING.

2) CATEGORICALLY REJECTING PARTICIPATION IN ANY COALITION, LABOR HAS APPEALED FOR A WORKING MAJORITY AND A CLEAR MANDATE TO GOVERN ON ITS OWN. IT HAS BASED ITS APPEAL ON THREE MAIN POINTS: THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF MINISTERIAL COMPETENCE AT ITS DISPOSAL, ITS RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND KEPT PROMISES DURING JUST SEVEN MONTHS IN OFFICE, AND ITS UNIQUE ABILITY TO ENLIST THE COOPERATION OF THE TRADE UNIONS IN COMBATTING INFLATION AND SOLVING THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

3) AS IN FEBRUARY, MODERATE AND RIGHT-WING MINISTERS HAVE BORNE THE BRUNT OF LABOR'S ELECTIONEERING; LEFT-WING FIGURES HAVE BEEN KEPT UNDER WRAPS AND RADICAL POLICIES MUTED. THERE HAVE BEEN NO UNPLEASANT SURPRISES, STATISTICAL OR OTHERWISE, SUCH AS THOSE THAT BEDEVILED THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT IN FEBRUARY. ALL IN ALL, LABOR'S CAMPAIGN HAS GONE WELL, AND IF THE OPINION POLLS ARE TO BE BELIEVED, THE WILSON GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE BACK IN OFFICE ON FRIDAY WITH A COMFORTABLE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. (FOR A DISCUSSION OF THE NUMBERS GAME, SEE SEPTTEL.)

4) THE TORIES HAVE BEEN HANDICAPPED BY THE BREVITY OF THEIR SPELL IN OPPOSITION. THEY HAVE NOT HAD TIME TO DEVELOP NEW POLICIES OR COME UP WITH NEW LEADERSHIP.

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PAGE 03 LONDON 13199 01 OF 02 091700Z

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PAGE 01 LONDON 13199 02 OF 02 091648Z

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 13199

THEIR PRIVATE POLLS INDICATE THAT THE COUNTRY IS SYMPATHETIC TO THE IDEA OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT AND THEY HAVE PLAYED HEAVILY TO THIS FEELING, BUT THE QUESTION REMAINS WHETHER THE PROMISE OF "A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY" IS EITHER CREDIBLE (IN VIEW OF LABOR'S REFUSAL TO JOIN) OR ADEQUATE. AS A CONSEQUENCE OF ADOPTING THIS STRATEGY, CONSERVATIVES HAVE BEEN CONSTRAINED FROM ATTACKING THE POWER OF THE TRADE UNIONS (NO "REDS UNDER THE BED" THIS TIME AROUND), OR THE "SPOILER" ROLE OF THE LIBERALS (LEST THEY PREJUDICE THE PROSPECTS OF A CONSERVATIVE-LIBERAL COALITION). FURTHERMORE, THE NEW IMAGE OF HEATH AS A MAN OF MODERATION AND CONCILIATION, WHILE PLEASANT ENOUGH, IS NOT ENTIRELY CONVINCING. THE NEW RESULT OF ALL THIS HAS BEEN A RATHER LACKLUSTRE CAMPAIGN. CONSERVATIVE STRATEGISTS WERE CONCERNED TO HAVE IT PEAK PRECISELY ON ELECTION DAY, BUT AS ONE REPORTER

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PAGE 02 LONDON 13199 02 OF 02 091648Z

OBSERVED YESTERDAY, THE GREATER CONCERN SHOULD BE THAT IT MIGHT NOT PEAK AT ALL.

4) LIBERAL STRENGTH IN THE OPINION POLLS HAS REMAINED MORE OR LESS CONSTANT AT ABOUT 19 PERCENT, WHICH IS WHAT IT REGISTERED AT THE ELECTION IN FEBRUARY. SINCE LIBERALS ARE FIELDING ONE HUNDRED MORE CANDIDATES THIS TIME THAN LAST, THEY MAY WELL INCREASE THEIR POPULAR VOTE WITHOUT INCREASING THEIR PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION.

5) THE BIGGEST JOKERS IN THE PACK REMAIN, OF COURSE, THE SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS. IN A SENSE, THEY HAVE MADE THEMSELVES THE ISSUE IN SCOTLAND. IF LABOR WINS HEAVILY IN ENGLAND AND WALES, THE SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS WILL NOT BE IN THE STRONG BARGAINING POSITION THEY HAD HOPED TO BE, BUT FEW PEOPLE DOUBT THAT THE SENTIMENTS THEY PLAY ON WILL CONTINUE TO POSE A SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO FUTURE BRITISH GOVERNMENTS.

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